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*A New English Grammar, Logical and Historical ; Part II, Syntax.*

By Henry Sweet, M.A., Ph.D., LL.D. Clarendon Press :  
London, 1898. Pp. IX, 137.

MR. SWEET published the first part of his grammar in 1892, and in the present volume limits himself 'to formal syntax, excluding what can be found in the dictionary.' It goes without saying that the book is marked by solid scholarship, and contains many acute observations and luminous comments. The best single section seems to us the treatment of *Do-Forms*, § 2169-§ 2195. The author notes the rare occurrence in Old English of *dōn* + infinitive, which, however, could be emphatic or unemphatic according to stress ; and traces briefly the spread of the construction in Middle English, and its gradual decadence as an unemphatic form till, by the year 1550, *I do see* was not periphrastic for *I see*, but emphatic, the merely periphrastic (unemphatic) force surviving to-day chiefly in negative and interrogative sentences.

Mr. Sweet makes no attempt to treat the gerund historically, but contents himself with a purely logical treatment. Yet he makes one distinction of the utmost value in § 2330 : 'Although the *ing*-form after the objective or common case is formally a participle, we certainly do not feel that *coming* in *I do not like him coming here* modifies *him* in the same way as it does in *I saw him coming* : *coming* in the former sentence is, in fact, a half-gerund.' The failure hitherto to distinguish clearly the 'half-gerund' from the gerund proper and participle proper has helped no little to obscure the whole subject of the gerund. Whether 'half-gerund' be the most felicitous name for this use of the *ing*-form, or whether Mr. Sweet does well to see a half-gerund in *She caught cold sitting on the damp grass*, may admit of contention ; but the distinction itself deserves consideration.

Among the more serious omissions in the book we note the author's passing over such constructions as *She was given a watch* (§ 2313) and *We had better go home* (§ 2319) without vouchsafing a discussion either historical or logical. In spite of the assurance (Preface to Part I.) that 'This grammar is not one-sidedly or fanatically historical,' we hardly think that a grammar which outlines the evolution of English word-order from

so remote a *point de repère* as Sanskrit prose would incur the reproach of historical fanaticism if it traced the origin of two idioms so genuinely English as the two cited. However, we shall find no further fault with the author for what he has left undone, but shall examine more closely some of the things done.

The first twenty-eight pages are devoted to word-order (the English of which, according to Professor Gildersleeve, is 'the order of words'). In explaining how the end-position of the verb in the Old English dependent clause was gradually displaced because 'a more convenient order had already established itself in independent sentences,' Mr. Sweet does not take into consideration the far-reaching influence exerted by substantival *pæt*-clauses in *oratio obliqua*. These dependent clauses, with their strong tendency to revert to their former or *oratio recta* order, were the first to break the bonds of the dependent end-position ; and this, too, before the influence of Norman-French had begun to be felt. The influence, therefore, of these recalcitrant *pæt*-clauses was a most important factor in the ultimate disappearance of transposition from dependent clauses. Again, when Mr. Sweet says (§ 1811) that 'Verb-inversion is sometimes caused by a preceding dependent clause both in Old English and Modern literary English,' we concede the principle, but not the relevancy of the illustration adduced, *Not as the world gives, give I unto you*. Here the inversion is caused by *Not* rather than by the modal clause.

We take exception also to the statement made in regard to the relative positions of the direct and indirect objects (§ 1823) : 'If both are pronouns, the accusative pronoun precedes : *give it me !*' But cf. *Give me (him, them, etc.) that, (this, these, etc.)*. And when both objects are personal pronouns, the only accepted construction is *Give it to me (him to me, him to her, her to them, etc.)*.

In many cases the reasons that the author assigns in explanation of a construction or the decadence of a construction seem fanciful in the extreme. We are gravely told (§ 1787) that 'In the colloquial *whisky hot* the adjective is tagged on because it has the complex meaning "made hot by the addition of boiling water" ;' and in the discussion of the collective noun (§ 1968) Mr. Sweet observes that 'These collective singulars

[*fish, fowl*, etc.] are used only when the animals are hunted because of their usefulness to man, or are taken in considerable numbers, but not when they are killed only in self-defense or as vermin.' After excepting from this novel generalization 'eel, lobster, and some others,' the author positively refuses to surrender *bear*, 'because this animal is hunted for its flesh.' Again, in commenting on the use of the definite article in Old English when a proper name is repeated, Mr. Sweet informs us (§ 2017) that 'In Modern English we have given up this usage, probably because of the ambiguity that would arise from such collocations as *the baker (the Baker)* . . . Hence if we wish expressly to mark the repetition of a proper name, we use some other demonstrative, or insert some adjective (*this, the above-mentioned*).' The reason here assigned for the disuse of *the* + a proper name is inadequate on the face of it; besides, we have always translated *sē* + a proper name by *this* or *the above-mentioned, the afore-said*, and believe that *sē* has precisely that import in this construction. The construction, therefore, is really the same in Old English and Modern English, the difference being one of words, not of meaning.

Under the head of relative pronouns, Mr. Sweet declares (§ 2124) that 'The omission of a relative in the subject-relation is quite exceptional in the present spoken English, but was frequent in the earlier Modern English,' i. e. A. D. 1500-1650. But the construction in question antedates by several centuries the period assigned. It is frequent in Chaucer, where it is usually introduced by *Ther is, Ther nys, Ther was*, etc.; and a glance at Einkenel's *Die Quelle der englischen Relativ-Ellipse* (*Anglia* XIV) shows that it may be found in Robert of Brunne's *Chronicle*, Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle*, Bōdēker's *Altenglische Dichtungen*, and *Genesis and Exodus* (ed. Morris). Einkenel, we believe, was the first to correct the old view of Koch, Mätzner, and others. Wūlfing finds traces of this ellipse, though meager, even in the works of Alfred (*Syntax* § 304).

Of the *which* Mr. Sweet remarks (§ 2132), 'In early Modern English *which* often takes *the* before it. . . . As this usage is against all analogy, it is probable that it is an imitation of the French *lequel*.' On the contrary, we do not believe that Old English adopted or imitated any French construction that was

'against all analogy.' The more thoroughly these supposed imitations have been investigated, the more clearly has it been shown that the influence of French, where influence can be demonstrated, was a quickening influence, and not the originating cause. An analogy, at least, to the *the which* construction is found in the Old English compound relative *sē þe*, *sēo þe*, *þæt þe*, in which *sē* was originally, it is true, more pronominal than articular, the meaning being *he that*, *she that*, etc.; but that *sē* was slowly losing its purely pronominal sense and becoming articular seems plainly indicated by the occurrence of such passages as *þā crīstenan men . . . þā þe hī* (Bede 479. 20) in which *hī* is added apparently to buttress the non-personal or *the* force of *þā*.

We cannot agree with Mr. Sweet in his disposition of *that is to say*. After discussing the use of 'Compulsive *is to . . .*,' illustrated by such sentences as *When am I to come again? You know what is to be done*, etc., the author adds (§ 2300): 'There is also a peculiar traditional use of this form in the phrase *that is to say: he was very eccentric, that is to say, he did odd things that made people laugh*.' We do not believe that the two constructions are at all related. *That is to say* = *that is the same as saying*, *to say* being predicate complement after *is*, as in *To see him (that) is to love him*.

There are not many instances of slovenly grammar in Mr. Sweet's *Syntax*. Among them we should put, however, this use of *it* (§ 2182): 'That this was the real reason for the general adoption of the periphrastic forms in questions is shown by the fact that it is never used in,' etc. Of typographical errors we have observed only one (§ 2185): 'For the reasons given in § 2181 inverted transitive verbs always take the periphrastic form, even in constructions in which transitive verbs keep the simple form,' where the second 'transitive' should be 'intransitive.'

In the Index we note the omission of *had rather* (§ 2319), 'negative emphasis' (§ 1885), 'negative position' (§ 1715), *only* (§ 1853), *what* (indefinite) § 2122, and *would rather* (§ 2319).

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